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UNCLAS VATICAN 002996

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI) AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL VT

SUBJECT: VATICAN SPOTLIGHT ON ROMA

1. SUMMARY: THE VATICAN'S FIFTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE PASTORAL CARE OF GYPSIES WILL TAKE PLACE IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY FROM JUNE 30 TO JULY 6. THE CONGRESS WILL FOCUS ON

THE PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE ROMA, BUT WILL ALSO INCLUDE LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS ON EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, INTEGRATION, AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE FORMATION OF A CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY AND TOLERANCE. NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH DIRECTORS FOR ROMA ISSUES WILL ALSO PREPARE A DOCUMENT AT THE CONGRESS ADDRESSING GLOBAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE CARE OF ROMA. THE CONGRESS IS BEING HELD OUTSIDE OF THE VATICAN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A SHOW OF RECOGNITION FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE HUNGARIAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE AND HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION OF ROMA. END SUMMARY.

2. SECRETARY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLES, ARCHBISHOP AGOSTINO MARCHETTO TOLD POLOFF AND POL ASSISTANT JUNE 26 THAT THE VATICAN'S FIFTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE PASTORAL CARE OF GYPSIES WILL BRING TOGETHER 150 REPRESENTATIVES FROM 25 EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES WORLDWIDE. MOST PARTICIPANTS, WHO WILL FOCUS ON THE PASTORAL CARE OF GYPSIES, REPRESENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, BUT THE U.S., INDIA, MEXICO, AND BRAZIL -- ALL OF WHICH HAVE SIGNIFICANT ROMA POPULATIONS -- WILL ALSO BE REPRESENTED. PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE NATIONAL DIRECTORS FOR ROMA ISSUES, PRIESTS, MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS, LAY PASTORAL AGENTS, AND ROMA. AMONG THE ROMA, THERE ARE 15 CATHOLIC PRIESTS, NUNS, AND STUDENTS, WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATION ROUND TABLE.

3. WHILE THE CONGRESS WILL REVIEW BROADER ISSUES RELATING TO INTEGRATION OF ROMA, MARCHETTO NOTED THAT THESE ISSUES WOULD BE EXAMINED PRIMARILY IN THE CONTEXT OF PASTORAL CARE FOR THE ROMA. NEVERTHELESS, MARCHETTO EMPHASIZED THAT THE HOLY SEE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF THE DIGNITY OF THE ROMA AND THEIR TREATMENT IN SOCIETY. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE VATICAN FREQUENTLY ADVOCATES ON THEIR BEHALF TO LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS. IN THIS REGARD, HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE HOLY SEE'S INTEREST ENGAGED A NUMBER OF VATICAN COUNCILS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL 'COR UNUM' WHICH COORDINATES VATICAN HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS WORLDWIDE HELPS PROVIDE FOR ROMA MATERIAL NEEDS, WHILE THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE EXAMINES GOVERNMENT POLICIES AFFECTING ROMA. MARCHETTO ELABORATED THAT HIS OWN COUNCIL FOR MIGRANTS HAD FOUR OFFICES DEALING WITH THE PASTORAL NEEDS OF REFUGEES, MIGRANTS, AND OTHER NOMADS (I.E. CIRCUS WORKERS, PILGRIMS, FISHERMEN), AND 'PEOPLE OF THE ROAD, INCLUDING RAILWAY AND AIRPORT WORKERS, SEAFARERS, FOREIGN STUDENTS.

4. IN A DISCUSSION OF USG EFFORTS TO ADDRESS ROMA ISSUES, MARCHETTO MADE A POINT TO URGE THE USG NOT TO GIVE HUMAN RIGHTS SHORT-SHIFT IN OUR FOCUS ON THE WAR ON TERRORISM. WHILE UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR NEW SECURITY POLICIES, MARCHETTO SAID HE HOPES THE PENDULUM WILL SWING BACK AND THE U.S. WILL RETURN TO ITS HISTORIC "DESTINY" OF OFFERING OPPORTUNITY AND FREEDOM TO THE WORLD'S REFUGEES, MIGRANT WORKERS AND FOREIGN STUDENTS. HE URGED THE USG TO CONSIDER SIGNING THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES. HE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT ONLY 21 COUNTRIES HAVE SIGNED ON AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS AND NO INDUSTRIALIZED NATION IS YET A SIGNATORY.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE THE CONGRESS'S PRIMARY FOCUS ON PASTORAL ISSUES, WE EXPECT THE CONGRESS TO DEVOTE CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO THE ISSUES SUCH AS EDUCATION, INTEGRATION, AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SHAPING PERCEPTIONS OF ROMA. BEYOND THE VATICAN, MANY CATHOLIC-AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE LAY CATHOLIC SANT' EGIDIO COMMUNITY REMAIN ACTIVE IN ASSISTING THE ROMA COMMUNITIES IN ITALY AND ELSEWHERE. OFTEN, HOWEVER, LOCAL PARISHES TAKE LITTLE INTEREST IN ROMA ISSUES AND CAN SOMETIMES BE HOSTILE. OUR SANT' EGIDIO CONTACTS RECENTLY TOOK US TO COFFEE HOSTED BY A ROMA FAMILY FROM BOSNIA. BETWEEN GUSTS OF WIND BLOWING THROUGH THE LARGE HOLES IN THE WALLS OF THEIR SHACK THE FAMILY EXPLAINED THAT THEY RECEIVED LITTLE HELP FROM THEIR LOCAL CHURCH OR THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. OUR SANT' EGIDIO HOSTS EXPLAINED THAT THE LOCAL PARISH PRIEST HAD LOBBIED THE GOVERNMENT TO REMOVE THE ROMA ENCAMPMENT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE HOLY SEE TO SHARE INFORMATION EMERGING FROM THE CONGRESS WIDELY WITHIN

BISHOP'S CONFERENCES, ND TO KEEP ROMA ISSUES AT THE
FOREFRONT OF THE VTICAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA.

NICHOLSON

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2003VATICA02996 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED